

# Vibrations



CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF  
PLANNERS  
INSTITUT CANADIEN DES  
URBANISTES

Eastern District, Ontario Professional  
Planners Institute

Région de l'Est de l'Institut des  
Planificateurs de l'Ontario

Summer 1998 Vol. 22, No. 2

## New Development Permit System Under Review

& the response of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute

by Anthony V. Sroka, MPL, RPP

Last April the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing forwarded to OPPI for comment a discussion paper on a proposed Development Permit System for Ontario. The following is a summary of the province's proposed streamlining effort and OPPI's position on the Development Permit System.

The Development Permit System discussion paper identified that further streamlining of the development process is warranted. The proposed system is intended to be a flexible planning tool which combines a seamless blend of zoning, site plan control and minor variances into one process. The associated process would only apply to areas designated by bylaw and would eliminate the need for re-zoning or minor variances in these areas when a proposal meets the criteria established in an Official Plan and development permit bylaw.

The Province recognizes that this system would not be required or used by all municipalities, nor would such a system need to be applied to all areas within a municipality. Ideally, it would be used in situations where creative solutions have been traditionally hindered by the lack of flexibility in the existing planning processes.

Through the development permit system, municipalities would be able to consider permitting a broader range of uses, to be regulated by design standards, and avoid the necessity for minor variances and site specific re-zoning. The details of development will be controlled through the issuance of a development permit. As a side note several other provinces, more notably Al-

berta, for example, have had similar systems in place for a number of years and have realized the benefits offered through such streamlining. The Ministry's discussion paper can be found on the Ministry's web page located at <http://nrserv.mmah.gov.on.ca/inthnews/backgmd/1998-04-21-e.htm>.

### OPPI's response

The Institute applauded the Ministry's efforts in proposing the development permit system and generally supports the direction of the Minister. The OPPI response focussed on the importance of Official Plans in the process, the broad based nature of the development permits system and its components, the role of the public, the issue of flexibility and the role of the Development Permit Officer.

***"OPPI concluded that the development permit system is a welcome change to the sometimes cumbersome, costly and confusing planning process that exists within Ontario today. Changes are required to make the system effective. OPPI believes that the Province is moving in the right direction."***

The role of the Official Plan in the development permit system was recommended by the Institute to remain in its traditional function. The Institute emphasised that the official plan should provide the framework to identify the goals and objectives of the system, the types of conditions which could be imposed and the areas within the municipality where



development permits are applicable. The Institute recommended that the performance based standards should be located within the development permit by-law itself. The Institute further agreed that the system should be implemented in a manner which replaced such processes as traditional zoning, site plan approval, minor variance and part lot control. Consideration was also recommended to be given to incorporating building permit requirements only after the Minister considers the merits of municipal test cases.

The Institute sees the system as a performance based system which would take into account the principles of development, density, massing, traditional zone provisions, permitted uses on either a specific or a broad basis at the discretion of the municipality, and allow for exclusionary uses all which should be consistent with the vision expressed in the local official plan. The Committee of Adjustment would continue to focus on non-conforming uses and be understood not to have a role in the system.

The Institute agreed that the site specific issuance of development permits should not be subject to appeal, however, objection by the applicant to the OMB upon delay of issuance, disagreement with conditions, or denial should be permitted. The Institute also recommended that enhanced notice requirements to the public should be at the discretion of individual municipalities. Underlining the proposed system lies the question regarding the degree of flexibility warranted. OPPI proposed that the parameters regarding flexibility needed to be outlined within the development permit by-law and thus subject to public comment.

The Institute also agreed with the Minister's proposal to allow for the delegation of the administration of the system to municipal staff. The Institute emphasised the need for professional accountability and suggested that the Development Permit Officer be a Registered Professional Planner (RPP).

## Emanations from the Chair by Dennis Jacobs



On June 1<sup>st</sup>, the Eastern District scheduled a consultation session on the Strategic Plan review and even with my stirring column in the last *Vibrations* coupled with offers for some liquid incentives, the session brought only one participant. Granted the notice was not an eye catcher but I did hear from a number of members who read it so I'm sure that a good proportion of you were aware of the event. So what do I draw from this outcome to take back to Council. First, it confirms for me that members interest in developing a vision for the Institute is limited (and if I wasn't on Council I'd be of the same mind). Thus the Strategic Plan should be a tool developed and implemented by the Council and administrative staff of the Institute. Second, members are generally satisfied with the value of their membership with some exceptions. It is the identification (and resolution) of these exceptions that should be Council's primary focus. Third, member involvement as volunteers (or even participants) is limited to issues or events that specifically affect that person. These are usually related to employment opportunities, growing a personal business or continuing education. Am I on the right track or just noting the obvious here? I'm still available to anyone who wishes to bend my ear in a conducive environment to talk about the Strategic Plan review.

## Vibrations

*Vibrations* is a quarterly publication of the Eastern Ontario District (EOD) of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) and is distributed free to all EOD members. Subscriptions are available at \$10 per year (4 issues) for non-members.

*Vibrations* is published quarterly. The following are the deadlines for submission of articles.

Issue	Deadline
Fall '98	15 September, 1998
Winter '98	15 November, 1998
Spring '99	15 March, 1999

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and not necessarily those of EOD, OPPI or the Editors.

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# Suggestions for Your Summer Reading by Barb McMullen

If you're looking for some interesting summer reading, try *Canadian Geographic*'s May/June 1998 issue on the environment. Here's a short synopsis of some of the articles you may want to check out further.

Don't miss the article "Soothing the Urban Soul", which describes how some Canadian landscape designers are rethinking what people want in urban open spaces. The article features the landscape design approach to three unusual new urban parks: "Oodena: The Celebration Circle" in Winnipeg's Forks Historic Site, "Cloud Gardens" in Toronto's financial district, and "Heritage Lakes" in the Edmonton suburb of St. Albert.

The short GeoMap article maps the new City of Toronto, reflecting the January 1998 amalgamation, and compares it to the city's limits in 1890 and 1945. It also lists a number of intriguing "megafacts". For example, the new City has more than 2900 firefighters, uses 1.2 billion litres of water per day, and has 4200 people who stay in shelters for the homeless every night.

The GeoWatch article on pollutant producers describes a recent controversial report entitled "Taking Stock". The report indicates that for the second year, Canadian companies, on average, produced more than twice the volume of pollutants as U.S.

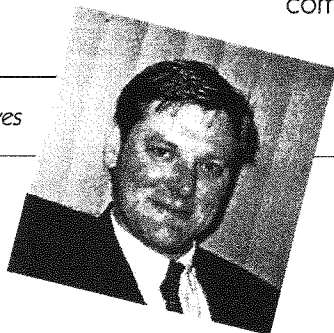
companies. And Ontario, despite a six-percent

decline in 1995, maintained its third-place ranking among the top 50 pollutant-producing states or provinces. Ontario's third-place showing in the report has been disputed by the Ontario Environment Minister.

Two other noteworthy articles focus on the car in urban Canada. "Driving Ourselves Sane" describes some measures being taken by Vancouver planners, and in the Quebec city of Rimouski to persuade drivers to get out of their vehicles. "Solving Gridlock" tells the story of the *Compass* electronic traffic control system which controls the overhead signs (you know, "Express Moving Slowly" over Toronto's Highway 401).

*Happy reading .....*

Philip F. Dawes



## New Members: OPPI (Eastern Ontario District)

### FULL MEMBERS

Murray J. Beckel	Township of Ernestown
Rosa Brochado	
Philip F. Dawes	Ottawa Board of Education
Nelson A. Edwards	
Edith Gingras	
Chantal Laliberté	Go for Green

### PROVISIONAL MEMBERS

Jessica C.M. Cheng	Chreod Ltd.
M. Maureen	
Pascoe Merkley	City of Brockville
Nancy L. Smith	Maxgroup Associates

## Upcoming Events Important Dates

### "Visions for the City: Lessons in City Building from Frederick Law Olmstead"

This September, 1998 Urban Forum lecture will feature Witold Rybczynski. For further information, please contact Sylvie Grenier @ 560-6058 (ext. 1597)



### "What Makes Great Streets"

Watch for this Urban Forum lecture in October, 1998 with guest speaker Allan Jacobs.



### Ontario Planning Journal Production Schedule

Deadlines for the September/October 98 issue are:  
District Pages 28 Aug '98



### Eastern Ontario District Annual General Meeting

Fall 1998



# The Lord Spoke to Noah, & Noah Speaks to the Lord about planning



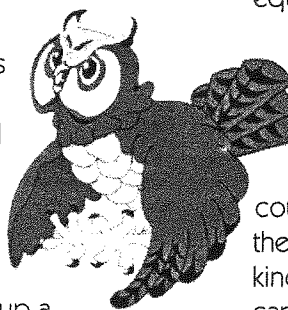
And the Lord spoke to Noah and said, "In six months I'm going to make it rain until the whole earth is covered with water and all the evil people are destroyed. But I want to save a few good people and two of every kind of living things on the planet. I am commanding you to build an Ark." And in a flash of lightning, the Lord delivered the specifications for an Ark. "Okay," said Noah, trembling with fear and fumbling with the blueprints.

"Six months, and it starts to rain," thundered the Lord. "You'd better have the Ark completed or learn to swim for a very long time." Six months passed, the skies clouded up and rain began to fall. The Lord saw that Noah was sitting in his front yard weeping. And there was no Ark.

"Noah," shouted the Lord. "Where is the Ark?" "Lord, please forgive me," begged Noah. "I did my best. But there were big problems. First, I had to get a building permit for the Ark construction project, and your plans didn't meet the code. So I had to hire an engineer to redraw the plans. Then I got into a big fight over

whether or not the Ark needed a fire sprinkler system. Then my neighbour objected, claiming I was violating the zoning and that he would take me to the OMB, so I had to get a re-zoning to permit a temporary structure in my front yard. Then I had problems getting enough wood for the Ark, because there was a ban on cutting trees to save the Spotted Owl. I had to convince Environment Canada that I needed the wood to save the Owls. But they wouldn't let me catch any owls. So, no owls."

"Then the carpenters formed a union and went out on strike. I had to negotiate a settlement with the labour relations board before anyone would pick up a saw or hammer. Now we have sixteen carpenters going on the boat and still no owls. Then I started gathering up animals and got sued by an animal rights group. They objected to me taking only two of each kind. Just when I got the suit dismissed, the environmental assessment agency notified me that I couldn't



finish the Ark without completing an environmental assessment impact report on your proposed flood. They didn't take kindly to the idea that they had no jurisdiction over the conduct of a Supreme Being. Then the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority wanted a map of the new flood plain. I sent them a globe."

"Right now I'm still trying to resolve a complaint from the employment equity commission over how many workers from each country in the world I'm supposed to hire.

Revenue Canada has seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to avoid paying taxes by leaving the country. And I just got a notice from the Province about owing them some kind of use tax. I really don't think I can finish the Ark for *at least* another five years."

Noah wailed. The sky began to clear. The sun began to shine. A rainbow arched across the sky. Noah looked up and smiled. "You mean you're not going to destroy the earth?" Noah asked hopefully. "No," said the Lord sadly. "The government already has."



## People and Places

### Correction

In the Spring issue of Vibrations, it was noted that following an interchange assignment with the Environmental Affairs Branch of Industry Canada, Ron Morrison has returned to the consulting business. Please note that Planned Environments International, Ltd. is the new consulting business that Ron recently established, and that Ron's correct e-mail address is [nrmplan@sprint.ca](mailto:nrmplan@sprint.ca). Ron's practise involves the pursuit of mainly international markets. Initial business development activities thus far have been targetted at the IFIs out of Washington, with a focus on Latin America. Ron can be contacted at 613-821-9970. His fax number is 613-821-9975.



# What's New in the Eastern Ontario District

## United Counties of Leeds & Grenville

### Status of Restructuring & County Planning

The municipalities of the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville have embarked on a course of significant change and greater responsibility. Several Townships, mainly in the northern area of the Counties, have amalgamated. Counties Council established a County planning program in 1998.

Leeds & Grenville encompasses an area of roughly 340 square kilometres and a population of over 60,000 exclusive of the separated City of

Brockville, and Gananoque and Prescott. Restructuring resulted in streamlining Counties' Council from 40 elected officials to 11. Previously there were 22 municipalities. Now there are 15. Five municipalities in the north of Leeds combined to form the new Township of Rideau Lakes; Merrickville and Wolford amalgamated to form the Township of Merrickville-Wolford; and Oxford-on-Rideau, Kemptville and South Gower came together to form the new Township of North Grenville. Early in

1998, the United Counties Social Services Department consolidated with Brockville, Gananoque, Prescott, and the Province to become the service delivery provider for social services, social housing, and ambulance. Currently a committee of mayors, reeves, and senior staff from the United Counties, Brockville, Gananoque, and Prescott are meeting regularly to examine further restructuring initiatives.

County planning was initiated early this year. Local planning services to interested municipalities are being offered on a cost recovery basis. Elsewhere, Rideau Lakes Township has hired Ms. Julie Stewart as Township planner, and North Grenville has hired Mr. Carl Cannon, R.P.P., as Manager of Planning, Building, and Economic Development. Both of these new Townships plan to consolidate their respective Official Plans this year. Ms. Barb Kalivas has resumed her planning duties at the Township of Elizabethtown following maternity leave.

Like most of rural eastern Ontario, the issues in the United Counties turn on the protection of rural character and the farming community, conservation of the natural environment, roads, private services and the delicate balance with much needed sustainable development.

Information: Sandy Hay, County Planner  
United Counties of Leeds & Grenville  
telephone: (613) 342-2710, ext. 336  
fax: (613) 342-2101

## Dr. Qadeer Wins APA Award

Dr. Mohammad Qadeer of Queen's University was recently awarded the 1997 Best Article award (Honorable Mention) by the Journal of the American Planning Association. His award-winning article is entitled *Pluralistic Planning for Multicultural Cities: The Canadian Experience* and was published in the APA Journal, Volume 63, No. 4, Autumn 1997, pp. 481-494.

The article includes an analysis of how Canadian planning is responding to the pressures of multiculturalism based upon case histories of Agincourt's Chinese malls, 'Monster Homes' in Vancouver, Somalis in Toronto's Kingsview Park, and Ottawa's Somerset Heights ethnic business enclave. The article surveys the range of planning issues arising from multiculturalism and describes the patterns of Canadian responses. It concludes by outlining lessons drawn from Canadian experiences about

how multiculturalism extends the meaning of pluralism in planning.

Mohammad Qadeer is professor and former Director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen's University. His longstanding interest in cross-cultural studies of urban development and planning has led to his exploration of cultural-sensitive planning in Western countries. On this theme he has also contributed a chapter "Urban Planning and Multiculturalism in Ontario, Canada" in "Race and Planning" edited by Huw Thomas and Vijay Krishnarayan (Avebury, 1994).

The Journal of the American Planning Association is perhaps the most influential academic journal for planning in the English speaking world, with a circulation of over 12,000. Dr. Qadeer's award is a significant honour.



# What's New in the Eastern Ontario District

## Light Rail Transit Pilot Project *by Barb McMullen*

The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton's 1997 Transportation Master Plan examined the value of using existing railway corridors in Ottawa-Carleton for public transportation.

The Plan indicates that the use of existing regional CP and CN rail lines are actively but lightly used, and that diesel light rail is an appropriate technology. The Plan anticipates that an existing north-south CP corridor could serve the Confederation Heights federal complex and Carleton University, and an east-west CN corridor could provide transit to employment areas along its route. The Plan also indicates that the CP corridor offers the potential of a long-term connection to the Outaouais. The Plan calls for light rail transit service to be in operation on a portion of a designated corridor by the year 2000.

In January 1998, Regional Council requested that staff prepare a report summarizing the feasibility of the light rail project, and identifying the preferred option, route, time frame and costs. This report and recommended procurement process will be considered by Transportation Committee in August.

The Region's process for the project includes a Light Rail Pilot Project (LRPP) Steering Committee, and a Sounding Board made up of representatives of interested groups, agencies and communities to contribute directly to the process.

A Community Forum on Light Rail, to provide information and obtain public input on key project issues was held on June 18, 1998. Another Forum is planned for July 28, when the recommended project scope and

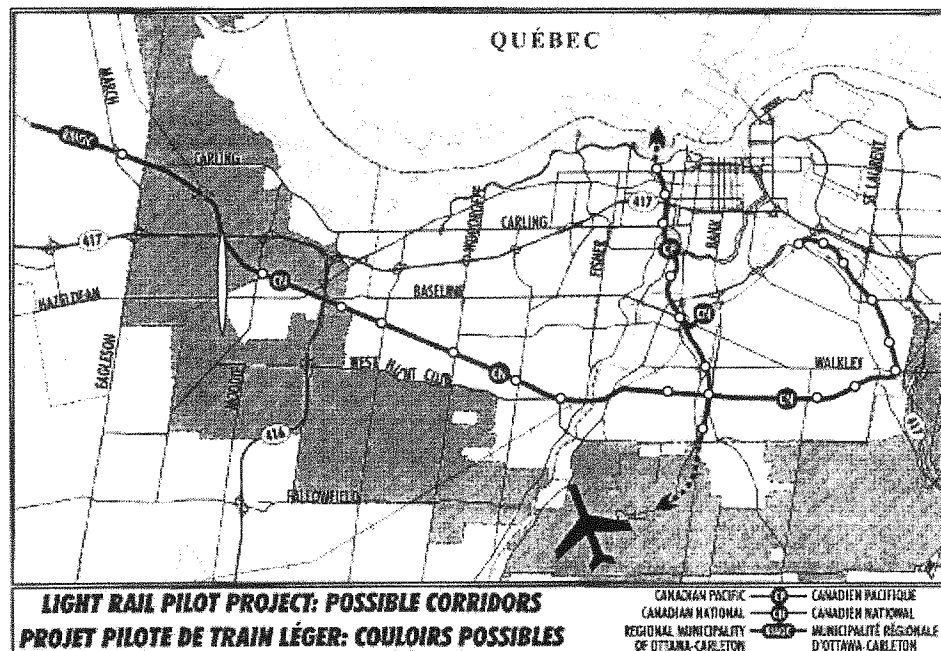
procurement process will be presented.

The LRPP will be subject to an environmental assessment under the Federal and the Provincial Environmental Acts. Environmental issues could include: increased rail traffic at grade crossings with safety and traffic implications; increased rail traffic with some increase in noise and emissions; the impact of traffic to and from the stations; effects of stations and station accesses on green space.

Other potential issues include the integration of light rail service with existing OC Transpo service; choice of vehicle technology; and ridership forecasts. To date, estimated daily ridership data appear to favour the CP line alternatives, as opposed to the CN line alternatives.

The approach to date envisages the exploration of a public partnership with the private sector in order to achieve a maximum-benefit, minimum-cost pilot. Given the length of time potential users of a new transit service require to adjust their travel choices, the pilot project would also have to be in operation for a number of years. It is expected that Regional Council will choose the preferred light rail line for the pilot project in early September, 1998.

Information: Pamela Sweet, Director, Policy & Infrastructure Planning  
Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton  
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e-mail: sweetpa@rmoc.on.ca





# Perspective: A Planner Takes a Hike

by Marc Sarazin.

**Editor's Note:** Marc worked for the past three years with the NCC on such projects as the Greenbelt Master Plan and the Plan for Canada's Capital. He is currently travelling the world, fulfilling a dream of seeing old friends and experiencing new places. His travels have taken him, so far, through southeast Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. Keeping him touch through e-mail, we asked Marc to be Vibrations international correspondent. Here is his first report.



Cities are an extension of values and culture. This has become very apparent to me by experiencing cities and places with values very different from the one with which I'm familiar. After visiting some of the world's largest and fastest growing cities, I am in awe of the population of places like Hong Kong, Macau, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Jakarta given the relatively small land area they occupy. Bangkok has a population of over 10 million and is located in an area about the same size as old Metro Toronto. The developing world is urbanising at a fast pace. Questions that come to mind are: Do these places work for the people that live there? What can I learn that may benefit Canadian communities?

Each culture has development patterns unique to their own history and needs. As a result, the cities of the developing world have densities far in excess of North American cities. The necessity of higher densities results in the creation of places that are far more efficient in the use of space and resources, and more dynamic by offering a wider variety of experiences.

Hong Kong's high densities support a wide variety of commercial space. In fact, commerce is found at street level practically everywhere. I was walking the city one day, considering what kind of gift I could purchase for my host's mother. While making my way down from my hotel in the mid-levels (just what it sounds like, the part of the city half-way up the hill), I came across a flower shop tucked partly below grade, next to a small road intersection that led up the hill. Much of Hong Kong is built on crazy angles and slopes, with roads that parallel or go up the hill towards Victoria Peak at various angles. The result is unconventional spaces that meet the sidewalk at weird angles and grades. As real estate is at a premium, there are no 'leftover' spaces going to waste.

The flower shop was tucked halfway below the street on one side, and pretty much at grade on the other, and a small stairway led me down to the entrance. The shop owner, an elderly Chinese woman, had a face that was filled with the character that comes from a full life. After

agreeing on an assortment of flowers, the shop owner pointed out a tiny hidden alley next to her shop where she would leave the flowers so I did not have to carry them all day. No space goes to waste in Hong Kong, and the result is a city filled with curious buildings and streets of every configuration, scale and orientation. It seems that high density breeds the efficient, if not interesting use of land.

The densely populated cities of the developing world also support a wide range of commercial uses. I was pleasantly surprised by the Chinese shophouses that line the streets in the older part of Georgetown, Malaysia. The shophouses are a product of the British colonial era, and are common in other southeast Asian cities such as Singapore. They are usually 2-4 stories high and from 5-8 metres wide. The first floor is used for commercial or industrial uses and is open to the sidewalk, which runs underneath a porch-like structure in front of each shop. The upper stories are used as supporting commercial space for the family-run business or more commonly as the owner's residential space. The shophouses on any given street generally repeat the same proportions and setbacks, with differing architectural details. The overall effect is very pleasant, and at the same time, creates functional streets that provide a range of commercial services.

The higher population densities are accompanied by an incredible diversity in types of public transportation. Each mode of transportation has its place and meets a need, but the variety and viability exists only because of the high density of population which supports it.

In Bangkok, there are many forms. The diversity in transportation modes is the creation of the market. Each trip has different requirements, and these requirements are met by different transport services. The Ital-Thai above-ground rapid transit system is currently under construction in Bangkok. There are also many types of buses. The regular bus, the air-con (air conditioned) bus is twice the price, but well worth the extra 3 baht (about 10 cents more) than the smaller version of the regular bus (with or without air-



## A Planner Takes a Hike *(continued)*

**Continued from page 7**

con). These buses are generally for longer trips along the main arterials. The next size down is the songtiau, which is essentially a small pick-up truck fitted with small benches, a roof, and a step at the back to make it easy to hop in. The songtiau is used for shorter trips in the .5 to 3 km range.

The river taxi is one of the most exciting transportation options in Bangkok. The larger ones make the journey up and down the Chao Phraya River for just a few baht, depending on how far you are going. It has by far the most interesting views, and you are away from the pollution of the streets. Smaller river taxis also run the length of various 'klongs' (canals) through the city.

A variety of road 'taxis' are also available. In addition to regular car taxis, in decreasing scale, there is the tuk-tuk, which is a three-wheeled motorized buggy that can seat three in a pinch. Noisy but effective, the tuk-tuk is a little cheaper than a regular taxi. The smallest is the motorcycle taxi. These are small but powerful two cycle motorcycles, usually driven by young men with fast reflexes and nerves of steel. The motorcycle taxi serves two purposes. The first is to take one or two passengers at a time down a small lane into a muban (village or neighbourhood). Many Bangkok neighbourhoods don't have streets wide enough to support traffic in both directions, and so the motorcycle taxi finds its place. The cost is a few baht depending on the distance, but motorcycle taxi trips are generally short with a few exceptions. The motorcycle taxi also provides longer journeys for the 'I need to get through traffic fast' customer.

Here is a personal example. I had to run three errands in different corners of Bangkok between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. on a Friday afternoon. Knowing that I could get stuck in two hours of traffic trying to do even one errand, I decided to opt for the motorcycle taxi. After discussing price with my driver, I hopped on, and was coached with sign language about how to sit and keep my knees tucked close to the bike. When traffic was moving, the driver made time by bobbing and weaving through the cars and buses. When we came up to a very long line at a street light, we avoided traffic by cutting through it! It was more than exhilarating to be whizzing at 40 km/hr between essentially parked cars, coming within centimetres of their sideview mirrors. A couple of times, when cutting around or in front of cars was impossible, my driver decided to take to the sidewalk for a few metres. When waiting for a change in traffic lights, in the midst of the smell of burning oil and the loud rumble of the two-stroke motors, I would think to myself .... what on earth am I doing! I accomplished all three errands with time to spare, but will likely not repeat my motorcycle taxi experience.

The Asian cities I've seen show that greater densities permit a more efficient use of land, and a wider range of commercial options and transportation modes. The densities of the developing world are inappropriate in Canada; however, the evidence I've seen suggests higher densities offer the potential for more efficient and dynamic communities. The challenge is to develop Canadian communities in a manner consistent with our values, development patterns and needs, while realising the benefits of increased densities.

